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May 2014

CC310 Crime Prevention through Property Identification : A Nebraska Property I.D. System

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Olsen, Duane A., "CC310 Crime Prevention through Property Identification : A Nebraska Property I.D. System" (2014). *Historical Materials from University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension*. 3233.
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CRIME PREVENTION
through
PROPERTY IDENTIFICATION
A Nebraska Property I.D. System

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OPERATION IDENTIFICATION

"Operation Identification" is a crime prevention program through which owners use a personal identification number to mark their property.^{1/} A local law enforcement agency must issue these numbers and maintain current records. It may also provide engravers, stamps, or other marking tools property owners can use to place that number on items. That personal mark improves the chance for recovery of stolen property. It also helps establish ownership claims for prosecution. In addition, when warning signs are posted to indicate the use of this system, crime may be prevented.

There are many "Operation Identification" programs. These programs rely on a variety of number systems including social security, drivers or auto license and telephone numbers. All systems can help firm up ownership claims to stolen property, if the theft is reported and filed with the National Crime Information Center. Officers in other areas may find these systems useful in recovering stolen property. However, officers have little time to trace ownership of suspicious property and start appropriate legal action. They need an identification system all officers readily recognize and one through which property ownership can be quickly traced. A Governor's Crime Control Coalition was formed to recommend a numbering system for Nebraska that would achieve these objectives.

RECOMMENDED NUMBER SYSTEM

Law enforcement agencies across the nation customarily report stolen property to the National Crime Information Center (NCIC). They rely on a system in which codes identify the state, county and community. This numbering system and an NCIC directory enables law enforcement agents to quickly identify the owner, whether a stolen property report has been filed or not! An NCIC directory containing these numbers is available to law enforcement agencies and should be on file in all 24-hour communication centers.

The first seven characters in the NCIC system help trace the location of the owner to the state, the county and finally to his community. For example:

N B 0 7 7 0 1

NB is the NCIC
prefix for
Nebraska

077 is the NCIC number for
Sarpy County

01 is the NCIC number for the Bellevue Nebraska
Police Department. These numbers designate the
County Sheriff or Police Department where the
number was issued and recorded.

^{1/} A synchronized slide-tape program describing "Operation Identification" is available for a small fee. It may be obtained through local Cooperative Extension offices or directly from the Audio-Visual Library, Room 102 Agricultural Communications, UN-L, Lincoln, NE 68583-0918, or phone 402/472-3021.

Three additional spaces identify individual property owners. Using a combination of symbols, these spaces provide adequate capacity to serve most Nebraska counties. The number assigned John Q. Public by the Belle-



Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Leo E. Lucas, Director of Cooperative Extension Service, University of Nebraska, Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources.



vue Nebraska Police Department to mark his property might be:

N B	0 7 7	0 1	P 7 2
(State)	(County)	(Community)	Mr. Public's Personal No.

The entry of an alphabetic system as the 8th character is recommended to alert law enforcement agents and improve their recognition of this system. Many agencies use the first letter of the property owner's last name.

RECORD KEEPING

Once the number is assigned, a record of each number and the property owner should be maintained by the issuing law enforcement agency at a 24-hour law enforcement communication center. Ready access to such records is essential to investigating officers who need to quickly trace property owner's identity.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

Property owners should notify the law enforcement agency that issued the identification number when the:

- * Owner changes address or telephone number.
- * Owner moves to another county in the same state.

Also notify the law enforcement agency of the new county (perhaps to obtain a new identification number).

- * Owner moves to a new state. Owner should obtain a new number when moving into another state to comply with the program in that state.

MARKING RECOMMENDATIONS

Two marking locations are recommended. One location should be obvious. Identify this location with a small "Operation Identification" warning sticker placed nearby. This mark will be of value for those "red-handed" catches, when neither time nor the opportunity for a thorough search is available. Place the second mark in a hidden location that only you know about. It will help establish your ownership claim if the first mark has been removed. It can be discovered when time and the authorization for a more thorough search are available. (See Nebraska Cooperative Extension Service Publication CC300 "Operation Identification System Manual" for added information regarding specific marking suggestions.)

BRAND YOUR GRAIN AND HAY

Use Identification Confetti, small tabs of paper 3/8" wide and 7/8" long, with your personal I.D. number, to identify grain or hay. A handful mixed in with the grain will do the job. Available supplies are inexpensive, non-toxic to animals, and can be easily removed from grain processed for human consumption.

IDENTIFICATION STICKERS

Use signs to discourage potential thieves by warning

them your property has been marked for easy identification. Several different symbols associated with crime prevention programs have been used for this purpose. Display large signs at doors, driveways and other points of entry. Use smaller signs for individual pieces of property.

YOUR INVENTORY

The "Operation Identification" number identifies owners, not property. Records are a valuable part of this program. A good inventory provides a complete, accurate property description that offers information valuable to you as well as to law enforcement officers and insurance adjusters! Record the serial numbers, and unusual marks, along with the estimated value of each item. Use a photo to verify ownership claims for selected items. Finally, be sure to keep these records in a safe, secure place!

MARKING TOOLS

There are many suitable marking tools available, ranging from heavy metal punches to electric engravers and rubber stamps. For certain valuables, a marking pen that applies an "invisible ink", visible only under an infrared light, may be appropriate. Engravers and other marking tools can be obtained from many retail outlets. In many communities local agencies or organizations have made marking equipment available as a public service.

REPORT THEFTS

Periodically check your equipment, grain, or livestock. The elements can destroy evidence and time can allow the thief opportunity to dispose of stolen property without fear of apprehension.

If a theft occurs, notify law enforcement officers immediately. Time is important. Preserve the scene. Don't disturb anything until officers have thoroughly inspected the area. You will be asked to provide a physical description and to recall unusual scratches, dents, or identifying marks.

NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH

Join a Neighborhood Watch. Call your neighbors and local law enforcement officers. Meet together to discuss your mutual concerns, your expectations, and procedures to use to improve your neighborhood security.

PREPARED WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF THE NEBRASKA GOVERNOR'S CRIME CONTROL COALITION MEMBERS

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Police Officers Association of Nebraska
Cooperative Extension Service, UNL
Nebraska Sheriffs' Association
Nebraska County Attorneys' Association
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